

# Excellence Strategy

## 1. Introduction: Background and Scope

We have set an aim of delivering excellent services to tenants and leaseholders in Torfaen. As a new organisation, we also need to build our reputation from scratch as an excellent organisation; well run and committed to service quality. For these aims to be achieved and for our services to improve continuously we need a framework that will ensure that we focus on our aim and can track our progress towards it. This strategy provides that framework.

To improve performance we need to have performance management and to manage performance. “Performance management” is having systems for collecting and reviewing hard data on performance. It is a necessary but not sufficient process for improving performance but is certainly key to demonstrating performance in a public service and for accountability. “Managing performance” is about dealing with people. It is about taking the raw data and making judgements then using softer leadership and management skills to work with teams and individuals to improve the service. It is far harder than performance management.

We will inherit Council services that have improved steadily over the past few years when measured against published National Welsh Assembly Performance Indicators for local authorities. Tenant satisfaction with the repairs service has also been rising in tenant surveys.

However, there is considerable scope for improvement. For example, some performance information is collected but not used, there is little benchmarking of performance, action plans are not always developed arising from monitoring or measurement, performance is managed as a central function rather than the responsibility of service managers, achievement and development interviews with staff are not consistently carried out or always of sufficiently high quality, the service planning framework is cumbersome, there is not always sufficient challenge to poor performance and performance is not measured in some key areas.

Expectations of Bron Afon are high and we need to rise to the challenge and this is not just expectations from tenants and leaseholders. Many staff, too, are keen to work within a new framework that taps their ideas for improving services.

## 2 Objectives of this policy and strategy

- To establish a baseline level of Bron Afon’s performance in key areas and compare our performance in those areas with the top performing registered social landlords (RSL’s) in the United Kingdom.

- To track our performance and the performance of the best performing RSL's over time so that we can publicly demonstrate that performance is improving and that we are closing the gap with the best performers.
- To provide a consistent framework for service planning within Bron Afon that ensures services work within organisational priorities and that challenging performance targets are set for all services.
- To enable us to identify teams and individuals who are performing less well so that we can focus additional support on these individuals and teams.
- To ensure leaders and managers within Bron Afon have the skills needed to lead and manage people and teams to enable them to improve their performance.
- To ensure we have systems in place that support and promote improved performance of teams and individuals.

### **3 The framework**

We will use the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence model as our framework for delivering excellent services. The following paragraphs of this document set out the actions we will take to improve our approach using the nine elements of the EFQM Excellence model. We have chosen this framework for the following reasons:

- It enables us to measure ourselves against our own objectives and measures continuous improvement
- It provides a framework for organisation and service planning and for reviews of services
- It is a wider assessment tool than others such as Investors in People, Chartermark, ISO or Green Dragon but can be used with these other accreditation schemes
- If used as an evaluation tool, it evaluates organisational governance and planning as well as performance
- If used for evaluation, it enables us to compare services within Bron Afon so that we can identify weaker services and focus our support on those services
- It offers the opportunity for our own tenants and staff to be trained and to form teams who can carry out self evaluations of our services consistent with our commitment to involvement
- It enables us to compare ourselves with the best public, voluntary and private organisations in Europe not just with other registered social landlords.
- It helps us consider what an excellent organisation would look like

### **4 Action proposed**

This section sets out the immediate developmental steps we will take to prepare Bron Afon for transfer. We will revise the Strategy and allocate responsibilities and timescales as staff are allocated posts within Bron Afon.

## Improving our Policies and Strategies

What we will do	When by	Who	Financial resources?
<p>We will develop a standardised checklist for the policy and strategy development process that ensures that we consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of future expectations and needs</li> <li>• Best practice in the UK</li> <li>• Equality and sustainability impact assessments</li> <li>• Feedback e.g. from tenants, residents, partners and staff on our current performance</li> <li>• Who needs to be involved and consulted and how to engage them</li> <li>• Opportunities for working with other partners</li> <li>• Best estimates of financial impact of implementation</li> <li>• Any risks arising from implementation</li> <li>• How the policy will be implemented and reviewed</li> <li>• Who needs to be informed and/or trained when the policy is complete and how to do so</li> <li>• How implementation will be supported and monitored and reviewed</li> </ul>	Dec 07		None
We will develop a mechanism for ensuring that information about best practice is widely shared across the organisation	Mar 08		
All policies and strategies will be regularly reviewed and we will identify a programme for review at time of transfer.	Ongoing		
We will provide opportunities for staff to work in multi disciplinary teams to develop organisational policies	Dec 07		
We will define clearly who are stakeholders are for particular services that we provide	Mar 08		

## Improving collection and use of feedback from tenants, residents and other local partners

What we will do	When by	Who	Financial resources?
We will carry out annual surveys of tenant and leaseholder satisfaction. So far as possible we will design the survey to enable us to compare with previous Council surveys whilst benchmarking with other UK RSL's	Sept 08		Yes
As soon as possible after transfer and subsequently at regular intervals we will have a programme of visits to all tenants to provide information and invite comments and suggestions and their views on services we provide	April 08 and ongoing		
We will develop a suite of feedback forms in accessible formats that allow tenants and residents to make comments, give compliments or make complaints; allow them to suggest improvements and also measure their satisfaction with key services; particularly repairs, improvements, allocations, and handling of anti social behaviour	Mar 08		Yes
We will publicise the actions taken as a result of feedback "You said, We Did"	From Apr 08		
All tenants who have had internal improvements will have a sign off visit with the relevant works supervisor and community housing officer (CHO) at which their feedback on the work and process will be sought and recorded. This will be followed up by a letter from the CHO confirming any follow up required	Mar 08		
We will provide local residents with a feedback form after major improvements and acknowledge their response. If tenants are known to have problems with completing forms we will provide support to enable them to give us feedback	Mar 08		
We will consider any suggestions for improvements carefully and respond to them advising on any action we are going to take and reasons.	Mar 08		No

<b>What we will do</b>	<b>When by</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Financial resources?</b>
We will monitor and learn from all compliments and complaints by service (and by community when ict systems allow this)	Mar 08		No
We will monitor and learn from complaints from residents and councillors by service (and community when possible)	Mar 08		No
At the end of each area programme of internal improvements there will be a review meeting to learn lessons at which all the feedback from tenants and residents will be considered.	Mar 08		No
We will set targets for increases in levels of tenant satisfaction in all areas	Mar 08		No
We will seek feedback on an annual basis from Borough and Community Councillors, local advice agencies, voluntary sector organisations working with our tenants and the Council's Housing Benefit section	April 09		Insignificant

### **Improving collection and use of staff feedback**

<b>What we will do</b>	<b>When by</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Financial resources?</b>
We will carry out an annual staff survey. So far as possible we will design the survey to enable us to compare with previous Council surveys whilst benchmarking with the best employers in the UK	Sept 08		Yes. Best done by external supplier to ensure confidentiality.
We will use the survey results to develop an action plan for improvements with the staff and a staff group to monitor implementation	Autumn 08		No
We will work to develop team meetings and the Staff Forum into effective forums for generating ideas for improvement and providing feedback from staff	Ongoing		No
The Chief Executive will hold regular meetings to which all staff are invited. The frequency will depend on feedback from staff	Mar/Apr 08		No
We will develop a suit of human resources	Mar 08		No

<b>What we will do</b>	<b>When by</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Financial resources?</b>
indicators that provide proxy information on staff satisfaction e.g. sickness absence, staff turnover and measure by teams and services			
We will develop mechanisms for staff ideas and suggestions to be encouraged, considered and acted upon	Mar 08		No
We will set targets for increases in levels of staff satisfaction in all areas linked to the staff survey	Mar 08		No

### **Improving collection and use of key performance results**

<b>What we will do</b>	<b>When by</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Financial resources?</b>
We will develop a suit of management information to be collected for each of our services and measure from April 08 at the latest taking account of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WAG requirements</li> <li>• What is important to tenants and staff</li> <li>• Our contractual commitments to the Council and funders</li> <li>• The benefits of benchmarking with other RSL's</li> <li>• Our organisational objectives</li> <li>• Equalities</li> <li>• Community benefits</li> </ul>	Mar 08		Some reconfiguring of Anite may be required
Team managers will receive management information within days of each month end showing comparative performance with other RSL's and the trends in performance and will be expected promptly to develop and implement effective action plans to address any areas where performance needs to improve	Mar 08		No
The Board, Membership Committee and Council Scrutiny Committee will receive a quarterly report on performance in key areas showing comparative performance with other RSL's and trends together with confirmation of action plans already in	July 08		No

What we will do	When by	Who	Financial resources?
place to address areas for improvement. We will aim to use a traffic light system and put this information on our website.			
Community Forums (and Area Forums in the interim) will receive a quarterly report on performance in selected service areas from the suite that they have identified as important and details of action plans	Mar 08		Marginal
<p>All major projects including works projects and new initiatives or major change projects will have a regular progress reports on key areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On time?</li> <li>• On budget?</li> <li>• Objectives still achievable?</li> <li>• New risks?</li> </ul>	Mar 08		No
We will develop a common system for highlighting areas and issues for senior management and Board attention using a traffic light system (e.g. red means attention required) and use this for performance reports, reports on risk and project reports.	Mar 08		No
We will set targets for improvements in all areas of performance	Mar 08 (may be later when no baseline information is currently available)		No
We will produce an annual report on performance and consider including performance by community.	May 09		Yes

## Improving collection and use of information about the community benefits we deliver

What we will do	When by	Who	Financial resources?
We will seek to develop outcome measures for our community based strategies so that we can demonstrate the benefits we are providing e.g. number of new jobs created, individuals trained., time spent on community activities, capacity building stats eg qualifications achieved	Nov 08		No
We will develop a method of measuring our environmental impact as an organisation and set targets for reduction	Mar 08		Yes.

## Improving Leadership throughout the organisation

What we will do	When by	Who	Financial resources?
We will develop and implement a range of individual and group development programmes for the Board, members, Bron Afon managers and teams and staff who are potential future managers to develop the leadership skills required now and in the future We will identify skills and competencies required of all the above	July 08 (for development of programmes. Delivery is a longer term objective)		Yes significant resources are likely to be required
We will develop clear guidance on the role of managers within Bron Afon and seek to provide development opportunities and put in support mechanisms to help them perform this role. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality and prompt communication with staff</li> <li>• Recognition for good performance</li> <li>• Identification of best practice</li> <li>• Working with other teams and partners</li> <li>• Reinforcing a culture of excellence</li> <li>• Managing performance of teams and individuals</li> <li>• Taking responsibility for the development of their staff</li> <li>• Managing budgets</li> </ul>	Jan 08		

<b>What we will do</b>	<b>When by</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Financial resources?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making difficult decisions and handling conflict</li> <li>• Implementing change effectively</li> <li>• Managing risk effectively</li> <li>• Demonstrating their own learning to their team</li> </ul>			
We will ensure staff are given the skills and opportunities to contribute to and lead organisational improvement initiatives and policy development	Mar 08		No

### Improving how we work with people in Bron Afon

<b>What we will do</b>	<b>When by</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Financial resources?</b>
We will develop and implement a Development and Learning Strategy for Bron Afon including a range of development programmes for staff and members throughout the organisation to develop the skills required to deliver services to an excellent standard now and in the future and enable them to adapt to changes that are or will be required	July 08 (for development of all the programmes)		Yes significant resources are likely to be required
We will develop an Equality and Diversity Policy and Strategy for Bron Afon that will cover staffing and services to the public including access to our services and offices	Mar 08		To be determined
We will develop a Human Resources Strategy for Bron Afon which will incorporate equality and diversity plans, proposals for staff involvement and communication, staff development, rewards and recognition arrangements and staff benefits.	July 08		Yes significant resources are likely to be required
We will develop a Community Involvement Strategy for Bron Afon (to include social inclusion initiatives)	Oct 08		Yes
We will develop a Health and Safety policy and annually reviewed action plan for Bron Afon	Mar 08		
We will prioritise the development of the	Mar 08		Marginal

<b>What we will do</b>	<b>When by</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Financial resources?</b>
following for Bron Afon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grievance and disciplinary procedures</li> <li>• policies and procedures for managing sickness absence</li> <li>• recruitment and selection policies and procedures</li> <li>• induction arrangements and review of performance during probationary periods</li> <li>• Capability policies and procedures</li> </ul>			
We will provide regular staff updates during the transfer process, hold regular meetings for all staff and update the Staff Forum on a regular basis.	Ongoing		No
The Chief Executive will hold regular meetings to which all staff are invited	Mar 08		No
Where compliments are received these will be passed on to staff and they will be thanked for their work	Mar 08	Chief Executive	No
We will hold regular events which celebrate the achievements of our staff, members and residents	From April 08		
We will operate a system of core briefs for staff that will be cascaded through the organisation with opportunities for feedback and dialogue with managers	Mar 08		No

### **Improving our use of partnerships and resources**

<b>What we will do</b>	<b>When by</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Financial resources?</b>
We will develop a Business Plan and Financial Strategy and set up a financial system with appropriate internal controls, delegations and monitoring arrangements and ensure that the financial implications of all new projects and initiatives are evaluated and approved before they are implemented	Mar 08	Director of Resources	Yes for new financial software.
We will develop a comprehensive Asset Management Strategy and ensure we have accurate and complete data and are actively managing all our assets. This will	Jan 08 (for a strategy. Data will be		Staff resources are required within the structure

<b>What we will do</b>	<b>When by</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Financial resources?</b>
include proposals for managing our offices.	captured over time)		
We will develop and implement a Risk Management Strategy for Bron Afon and ensure that key risks are identified for all new projects and initiatives	Jan 08	Director of Resources	To be determined
We will finalise the ICT Strategy	Nov 08	Director of Resources	Yes significant budget required already identified
We will develop a plan for managing information and knowledge within Bron Afon and ensure we identify and share best practice. We intend that all staff should have access and be able to use a computer.	Jan 08	Chief Executive	No
We will establish a system for monitoring and reviewing our external partnerships and for sharing information obtained from them throughout the organisation	Jan 08	Chief Executive	Aim of review is to ensure we are using staff time wisely within partnerships
We will establish efficiency targets for all our services from 1/4/09 focusing on securing these through streamlining our processes	Dec 08	Director of Resources	No
We will establish targets for minimising our environmental impact	Mar 08		

### **Improving our processes**

<b>What we will do</b>	<b>When by</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Financial resources?</b>
We will explore the use of Lean Thinking techniques to allow staff to redesign key processes and establish some champions to lead process reviews	Mar 08		Training may be required
We will identify a prioritised programme of reviews by staff and members of key processes to ensure they are as efficient as possible aiming to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove unnecessary processes completely</li> <li>• Removing unnecessary steps in processes or involvement of</li> </ul>	Mar 08	All staff	No

What we will do	When by	Who	Financial resources?
unnecessary staff • Minimise paperwork • Capture only essential information • Maximise automation of repetitive tasks			
Where reviews significantly affect tenants or residents we will establish task and finish groups to assist with the reviews	ongoing		Insignificant
We will train lead users in all the ICT systems who will be responsible for ensuring we are using the ICT software systems to their maximum potential. This will support process reviews	Sept 08		Yes, external trainers from software suppliers may be required
We will ensure that all staff are trained to a minimum standard in our ICT systems to maximise their efficient and effective use			
We will establish a mechanism for staff to identify and lead improvements of any processes that can be streamlined anywhere in the organisation (ie including outside their normal areas of work).	Jan 08	Chief Executive	No
We will carry out a door knocking exercise with as many staff as possible to introduce Bron Afon We will then introduce a regular programme of door knocking aiming for at least an annual basis thereafter	Apr 08	All	Yes some costs for health and safety such as wet weather clothing and food. Also impact on service.

#### 4 Assessment and challenge

Bron Afon will be inspected on a periodic basis by the Wales Audit Office and the Welsh Assembly Government and the Council will both be monitoring our performance in some key areas.

Our values include being passionate about excellent service delivery, welcoming constructive challenge, being open and honest about our performance and being accountable to the communities we serve. If we are to live by these values we should not rely on these external evaluations. We should develop our own mechanisms for honest self evaluation and commission our own external evaluations or support for our internal evaluations where these will help us improve.

The Housing Corporation publications on registered social landlords that have had problems identify weak governance as a common factor. For this reason, a review of our governance arrangements is suggested as an early external evaluation.

<b>What we will do</b>	<b>When by</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Financial resources?</b>
Establish internal audit arrangements that can evaluate value for money and possibly other elements of the EFQM excellence model	Mar 08	Director of Resources	Yes.
Commission an external evaluation of our Governance arrangements	July 08	Director of Resources	Yes
Explore potential to develop an assessment framework that provides an EFQM assessment but covers Key Lines of Enquiry	July 08		Yes since external consultancy is likely to be required
Establish and train teams of staff and members as assessors for key lines of enquiry and/or EFQM	Sept 08 onwards		Training budget required
Carry out self evaluation of Bron Afon and teams	Starting April 09		External consultancy will be required to support this process
Review advantages and disadvantages of seeking other accreditations such as Chartermark, Investors in People, ISO and Green Dragon	Sept 08	Chief Executive	Accreditation fees would be required
Consider whether to commission a Social Audit of Bron Afon in addition to financial audit	Jan 09	Board	Yes an external social auditor will be required
Explore how best to evaluate access to Bron Afon services and our policies and procedures from an equality and diversity point of view including accessibility of offices and services to people with disabilities and accessibility of services to people with learning difficulties, whose first language is not English or who have difficulties with written materials	Jan 08		If we involve voluntary organisations such as the Disability Advice Project to carry out audits for us there will be a cost implication

## **6 Monitoring this Strategy**

The Chief Executive will provide an annual report to the Board on the delivery of this Strategy, starting with a report on the development work and baselines performance with a report to the Board in June 2008.

## **7 Equality and diversity implications**

Improving services will benefit all tenants and leaseholders. Our Equality and Diversity and Human Resources Strategies should ensure that we address any particular needs of groups of people in the Borough in relation to accessing and receiving our services or working for us. If we can also develop a methodology for external review of our approach, we will have an independent perspective to assist with improvement.

## **8 Community involvement implications**

The proposals in this strategy set out how we will be accountable to members, communities and to the Council as the public representatives for our performance. They also set out proposals to involve members in self evaluation teams.

## **9 Financial implications**

These are set out in the proposals above but not yet costed. Most of the implications are for the cost of training and development. We will need to establish an appropriate budget for development and then prioritise our work within this budget.